Crow's loan to Kelly not enough to beat Ocheltree

By Tim Hasbrook
Signal Staff Writer

SAUGUS — Brian Kelly's chances of keeping his points lead in the NASCAR Late Model division looked bleak Saturday night at Saugus Speedway.

Kelly blew the engine in his Oldsmobile during the trophy dash before 2,531 fans and reluctantly put chances of racing in the main event.

Enter Rick Crow.

The Chevrolet Chromaro racing driver gave his car to Kelly so he could race in the feature race and hopefully maintain his points lead.

"It's another one in the points race and I have a car that can win the main event," Crow said. "I missed the first eight and last week. I owe it to the championship to help the champ."

Despite Crow's generosity, the checkered flag was not in Kelly's future. Rich Ocheltree won the 40-lap feature race, leading from start to finish.

"It's a big win for us," said Ocheltree, who won his first feature of the year. "We really needed to win one big."

Kelly's chances of winning it all looked to be in doubt when Craig Raymond and Darrin Cyprowski collided with the Arizona resident on the back straightaway.

"It's a fun car. I just didn't want to scratch it," Kelly said. "After I saw cars dropping out, I just wanted to finish the race.

"Rick Crow saved us big. It's great. It's fun. And it did 40 laps. That's all I needed. That guy saved my life."

Once Crow decided to let Kelly drive his car, some adjustments had to be made.

"I'm jammed in the car and he has a bigger belly than I do," Crow said.

As a result, Kelly removed the dash board and lowered the steering column.

"He told me as long as I can fit in it, I can race it," Kelly said.

In a battle for second place in lap 22, Cyprowski and Raymond tangled through turns two and three. Both drivers suffered flat tires and had to pit to replace them.

Ocheltree maintained his early lead.

In the Grand Am Modified feature race, Dave Blankenship led for all 40 laps en route to victory.

Blankenship entered the night's races third in points, 56 behind first place Dave Phipps.

Phipps finished second to maintain a 24-point lead over Blankenship.

Brian Horst won the 12-lap Pure Stocks feature race. Marion Dale overlord into the race three wall to lap two and left the race.

Crow won the Late Model trophy dash. Blankenship won the Grand Am Modified version, and Joe Hanson won the Pure Stock trophy dash.

Clayton Clooney resident John Wilkinson suffered engine problems during warm up laps prior to the Grand Am Modified trophy dash and withdrew from the race.

Associated Press

Timber Country (left) leads Kentucky Derby winner Thunder Gulch (right) and the rest of the Preakness field on the way to winning the race.

Horse

Continued from page C1

They raced that way down the backstretch and then Day took Timber Country outside on the final turn as Oliver's Twist, ridden by Alberto Delgado, moved toward the rail.

Oliver's Twist, Timber Country and Thunder Gulch then passed the horses in front of them in the stretch drive, with Timber Country getting in front in midstretch and having enough to hold off Oliver's Twist.

Oliver's Twist was bidding to become the first Maryland-bred to win the Preakness since Deputed Testimony came off Boniface's farm on race day to win in 1983.

Completing the order of finish after Sea Hawked were Macho, Tabbin Man, Our Country, Mystery Storm, Tejano Run, Pata Brana and Irron, Irron, a Texas-bred who made a 2,000-mile van trip to Pimlico, arriving May 12, finished 41 lengths behind Timber Country.

Irron, who had finished seventh in his previous start at Ratoma Park, delayed the start when he reared up in the gate in the No. 1 post position. Jockey Ricky Frazier, son of trainer Roy Frazier, got off the horse briefly and then remounted.

"Do they run on here on Sunday?" the delighted Lukas said, referring to his four Pimlico stakes victories in three days. "We're thrilled to death."

Lukas also had to be pleased with the effort of Thunder Gulch, who had been ignored before the Derby and paid a winning mutuel of $51.

"My colt by no means disappointed himself," jockey Gary Stevens said of Thunder Gulch. "He's been consistent all year long. He comes out of the Derby, runs big today and just gets beat for second. I have a lot of respect for him. He's a racer."

Timber Country is owned by W.T. Young, who also co-owns Tabasco Cat; Robert and Beverly Lewis and Graham Beck.

It was also the fourth Preakness victory for Lukas, who was upgrading in the race for the 14th time with his 17th and 18th starters.

Athletes play numbers game

By Hal Bock
AP Sports Writer

Call it the number mumbo, a digital dance of superstition that makes athletes demand their own personal identification on their uniforms.

One day Michael Jordan is No. 45, the next day he's No. 23. Tomorrow? Who knows?

Don't worry. Jordan promises the NBA and the sporting goods industry of America that there will be no more jersey juggling. He's 23 for good, now.

He wasn't always that rigid, though. For the 1984 and 1992 Olympics, Jordan wore No. 9. And on Feb. 14, 1990, when his No. 23 jersey was stolen, he had to wear No. 12 for a game against Orlando. He merely scored 49 points during the game.

Still, he says, he's more comfortable with No. 23.

For the numerologists in the audience, Jordan explained his reasoning.

"If it's a mental confidence, then it's a mental confidence," he said. "I'm going to stick with it until I finish playing basketball. That's me. Twenty-three is me."

And 33 was Larry Bird. Or was it Kareem Abdul-Jabbar?

And 32 was Magic Johnson. Or was it Bill Walton?

Numbers are like private property, so identifiable with particular players that they wouldn't think of going anywhere without the digits near and dear to them.

There was a simpler time in sports when jerseys were issued on a first-come, first-served basis, largely dependent on what was available. If a new player showed up and needed a nine-46 jersey, he was issued a nine-46 and the number on the back was immaterial.

That was when teams didn't realize the need for mental health professionals to manage the delicate psyches of their athletes.

Now numbers are important commodities, so much so that players will pay for their favorites. When Rickey Henderson surfaced in Toronto a couple of years ago, he found infielder Turner Ward equipped with his favorite number, 24, in the entrepreneurial spirit of the modern athlete, Henderson figured everything had a price and purchased No. 24 from Ward. It cost $25,000, tip money for somebody who is making millions.

Rick Barry also loved No. 24 and wore it every where he went in a vagabond basketball career. When he arrived in Houston, he found No. 24 already occupied by the rather imposing Mirsa Malone, who was not interested in changing. Barry solved the dilemma by wearing No. 2 for home games and No. 4 on the road.

What would the NBA think about that declaration of independence today?

No teams have retired more numbers than the Boston Celtics and New York Yankees. The Celtics had 19 of them hanging from the rafters when they closed Boston Garden and the Yankees have retired 12, including No. 8 twice for both Bill Dickey and Yogi Berra.

When flamboyant rookie Deion Sanders showed up in spring training with the Yankees in 1989, he advised equipment manager Nick Priore that he'd like a low number, perhaps 3 or 4. Priore mentioned a couple of guys named Ruth and Gehrig, and Sanders settled for something less dramatic.

Jim Piersall wore No. 37 throughout a topsy-turvy baseball career. When he teamed up with the original mediocre New York Mets, he had a problem. No. 37 belonged to the manager, Casey Stengel.

Piersall had a unique solution. He asked for No. 3774. Stengel vetoed that idea, saying, "There's only room for one clown on this team." Reluctantly, Piersall took No. 34 and was wearing it when he celebrated his 1000th home run by running around the bases backward.

Pitcher Roger Craig, saddled by that terrible Mets team, was hogged down in a record-tying, 18-game losing streak during the summer of 1963 when he dramatically discarded his No. 38 and donned No. 13, asserting he'd wear that dreaded digit until he won a game. In his next start, Jim Hickman hit a grand slam homer in the bottom of the ninth inning and Craig came up a winner.

Perhaps the most memorable devotee of No. 13 was Ralph Branca, who welcomed it when he pitched for the old Brooklyn Dodgers because there were 13 children in his family. Then Branca was victimized by Bobby Thomson's pennant-winning home run on Oct. 3, 1951, and the front office decided there was a mystical connection.

"They said Oct. 3 was the 10th month and third day and that added up to 13," Branca said.

COC's Overlock takes 5th in State JC 1,500

BAKERSFIELD — Jennifer Overlock broke the school record in the 1,500 meters by more than nine seconds to headline the performances of the College of the Canyons track team at the State Championships Saturday at Bakersfield College.

Overlock led the first two laps before falling back in the third. She then kicked her way to a fifth-place finish in a personal-best 4 minutes, 47.92 seconds.

Ramon Serrano raced in the steeplechase and finished third in 9:37.4. Melissa Dunkerley was 10th in the triple jump with a leap of 34 feet, 11 inches, and Tish Isaac was 10th in the javelin with a throw of 106-3.

Correction

In Saturday's edition, statistics and scores were incorrectly attributed to Saugus softball player Nicole Giacalone. Nicole Giordano tripled and was quoted.

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Track

Continued from page C1

After he decided to skip the 3,200, Simbon was feeling better about the 1,600.

"I was really frustrated," he said. "I didn't expect that to happen. I expected to be in control. I wanted a title, or maybe two titles. That's OK. Everyone has an off day.

"I had a CIF championship my junior year, so I was a little disappointed in the back of my mind, but that will fix itself. If I win a state title, then a CIF title, who cares?"

Simbon said that even if he had run the 3,200 Saturday, he would have dropped it in the Masters meet to concentrate on the 1,600.

James was almost glad to see her season end. This was the first year she ran the 400, and she broke the school record numerous times.

"It seems like each has gone on for three years, straight," James said. "I got 66th and I was the 65th-fastest running in. I'm happy with that. I kita well as bad. I had trouble with the blocks and didn't get a practice start and then he (the starter) must have waited five seconds (before firing the gun). I almost false-started."

James didn't think she was anywhere near qualifying immediately after the race, but, like in the Division I race, she finished where she qualified, 10th overall.

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